



INTERVIEWING JESUS;

OR, A MIDNIGHT VISIT.

ABOUT the year A.D. 33, there lived in the city of Jerusalem a gentleman of the name of Nicodemus. He was a ruler of the Jewish nation, and a member of their Sanhedrim. He was religiously connected with a respectable denomination called the Pharisees, a people zealous of the law, and most attentive in keeping all the fasts and feasts.

During the Passover week, when a great many strangers from all quarters were in the city, there was considerable stir concerning one Jesus of Nazareth, who was at that time in Jerusalem. He had been working miracles, and had turned out of the temple a number of men who had been making a market of it. This caused a great sensation among the more religious of the people, and the denomination to which Nicodemus belonged was almost to a man against him. Notwithstanding all this, it appears that Nicodemus was unsatisfied; he would not be led by "public opinion," but was determined to go and hear for himself. So after it was dark one night he set off all alone to have an interview with Jesus. What passed between them is most interesting to us all, and the interview resulted in this religious gentleman's conversion. Previous to that night he had been merely a religious *professor*, but after that he was *possessor* of salvation, and a *confessor* and disciple of Christ. (See John 7:50; 19:39.) Let us see how all this came about.

"YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN."

Before Nicodemus had been long in the company of Jesus, He told him that "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This startled Nicodemus; it was entirely new to him. He believed in men being religious, and keeping the feasts, but of being "born again" he knew nothing. Before he had long time to be puzzled over the new doctrine, Jesus told him something else, more startling still, and it was this—

"Marvel not that I said unto thee, YE must be born again." Not only wicked men, like drunkards and thieves, need to be "born again," but YOU—*your own self*.

This cuts at the root of all human religion. It matters not how "good" people are, or, "what church" they belong to, or how often they "take the Sacrament." Jesus says they must be born again, or never enter God's kingdom. It doesn't matter although they "say their prayers and read their Bibles," and "do the best they can;" if they are not "born again" they "*cannot see the kingdom of God*"—they must, therefore, be in Hell for eternity. It's a "MUST be," you see. Perhaps you don't believe this, reader. A religious gentleman told us a few months ago he did not think he required to be "born again," because he was brought up religiously, and had always been a Christian. Now if any man could have gone to Heaven without it that man was Nicodemus, and yet to him the Saviour said, "Ye must be born again."

MUST BE BORN AGAIN.

Not because you are worse than your neighbors.

Not because you sometimes lose your temper.

Not because you are a very wicked person.

But because you are a sinner—a sinner root and branch; you were born a sinner; you grew up a sinner and you are a sinner still—with a sinner's nature. "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?" No. Why? Because they were so born. So with man. He cannot be reformed so as to please God; he cannot be improved so as to gain Heaven. He needs to be made "*a new creature*." He cannot bear the fruit of the Spirit so long as he is in the flesh, any more than a bramble bush could bear apples, or a thorn bear cherries. It is not a little help that he needs to make him "all right"—it is not a "good religious education"—it is a new life. And this new life must come from somewhere outside himself; he cannot find it within him—he cannot earn it by his work.

A blacksmith once said, "I have often tried to be good; I have often made resolutions to live better; but this being 'born again' is beyond me—I never tried that." It was something he could have no hand in; it is God's workmanship.

Reader, have you found this out for yourself?

WHAT DOES BEING "BORN AGAIN" MEAN?

It is not being *baptized* with water.

It is not being made a *temperance man*.

It is not becoming *religious* or "making a start."

It is not "turning over a new leaf," or joining a society.

Neither of these things, nor all of them put together, is being "born again."

Some people think when they get "reformed" that it's all the same as being "born again," but that's a great mistake. A young man once told us he was "quite sure he would be in Heaven, because he didn't drink now." "Very good, sir; glad to hear it; but when were you 'born again?'" He knew nothing about that. He was *reformed*, but not *regenerated*; he was as unfit for Heaven as he ever had been.

A minister of the Gospel once told us that "he preached seven years to others before he was 'born again' himself." Terrible work! It's time that some other religious men and women in the world were asking themselves solemnly this question—

"AM I BORN AGAIN?"

or, do I just 'go to church' and 'keep up a profession' because I was taught to do it, and it's a fashionable and respectable thing?"

No reformation will suffice,
'Tis *life* lost sinners need.

Reader, HAVE YOU BEEN "BORN AGAIN?"

Consider. Mind that nothing else will do instead, and that nothing but this will fit you for being in heaven.

"WHAT MUST I DO TO BE BORN AGAIN?"

NOT PRAY FOR IT;

NOT WORK FOR IT;

NOT WAIT FOR THE SPIRIT;

NOT TRY TO LOVE GOD;

BUT RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST, THE GIFT OF GOD.

Listen—"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16); and "To as many as received *Him* to them gave He power to become the *Sons of God*, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12.)

That's how it's done. It is not "As many as are sorry for their sins," or "As many as weep and repent, or go to the penitential bench to be prayed for"—but, "AS MANY AS RECEIVE HIM."

When a man enlists he becomes a soldier. When a man receives Jesus Christ, the gift of God, he becomes a Christian, or, in other words, he becomes God's child—he is born of God.

Reader, have you received Jesus as your own Saviour? I mean, is He yours? Can you say—"Jesus is mine—my Saviour; He has saved me?" If you have received Jesus, then God has received you—you have become a child of God and a joint heir with Christ.

"BUT MUST I NOT FEEL A CHANGE?"

Certainly you shall. But what kind of a change do you expect, and when do you expect to feel it?

When the doctor puts the medicine at your side, do you expect to feel better *before* you take it, or *after*?

When your friend brought you home that gift for a present, did you feel it was yours *before* or *after* you received it?

Surely not before, but after.

And just so with salvation. You cannot expect to feel saved when you are not. You cannot expect to know that Jesus has saved you until you have received Him, after which He saves you.

Many people are "waiting for a change." They want to feel a burden roll off, then they think they would feel "nice" and "happy." And the fact is, many have felt such things who where never saved at all—they felt a Christless change take place, and thought they were saved, but soon found out it was a sham. They had no Christ. God's way is—receive Christ first, and the change will come all right afterwards, but on no account wait till you "feel a change" before you accept God's remedy, or you will die in your guilt, and perish eternally.

"HOW CAN I KNOW THAT I AM BORN AGAIN?"

"How do you know that there was a flood?" I asked a young man one night. He was one of that kind that "could not see how any one could be sure of being 'born again' till the great day." "Oh," he said, "because the Bible says so."

"And is that all you have for it?" I asked. "Yes, and it's enough," said the young man. "Quite so. Very well. The same Bible that says there was a flood says this also—'Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;' and I know that I *am* born of God because God says, 'Whosoever believeth * * * is born.' Now, is that enough, think you? If you believe that there was a flood simply because God says so, is it not as easy to believe the same God when He says the believer in Christ *is* born of God? If you can believe Him in the one case, is it not as easy to believe Him in the other?"

And the true evidences to me that I myself am a true believer in Christ, and born of God, are that I am a new creature, and received the Holy Ghost when I believed.

Reader, are you a believer? Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth, who died *on* Calvary for your sins, was the Christ of God? But if not, then you are at this moment outside the kingdom of God—and living on, and dying so, you will be *out* of Heaven and *in* hell for ever.

GRACE PUBLISHING HOUSE,

325 W. North St., York, Penna.